

The Comfort Starr House
Guilford, Connecticut

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Connecticut

Historic American Buildings Survey
Harold H. Davis, District Officer
29 Whitney Ave., New Haven, Conn.

THE COMFORT STARR HOUSE
Guilford, New Haven County, Conn.

Owner: Mrs. Annie Rawson

Date of Erection: 1645

Architect: Not known

Builder: Not known

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: $2\frac{1}{2}$

Materials of Construction:

Stone foundation
Framing Hewn Oak
Chamfered beams and
posts
Floor Boards 1" thick
oak, 1'-0" to 1'-6" wide
Exterior walls Oak clap-
boarded
Roof framing Oak
Chimney Stone

Other Existing Records:

Colonial Dames of America
Yesteryears of Guilford - Griswold
History of Guilford - Smith

List of Photographs:

1. Northeast Elevation
2. Hall Fireplace
3. Parlor Cupboard

THE COMFORT STARR HOUSE

GUILFORD, NEW HAVEN COUNTY, CONN.

The town of Guilford, Connecticut was founded in 1639 by a group of church people who followed Reverend Henry Whitfield from England. On shipboard the Plantation Covenant was signed by some twenty-odd men, one of whom, Henry Kingsnorth is generally supposed to have built the Comfort Starr house possibly as early as 1645. This would make it the second oldest house in the state.

The house has come to be known as the Comfort Starr house for the man who purchased it from the heirs of Henry Kingsnorth in 1694, and whose family resided in it for four generations.

Comfort Starr came to Guilford from Middletown in 1690 and in 1694 he purchased this dwelling. Here he lived with his wife and family and here he carried on his trade as a tailor. He worked at this business with such assiduity that he is said to have worn through the floor of the south chamber of his house where he stood at his cutting board. His diligence was repaid, for when he died he left a large landed estate. His tailor's goose and a chest bearing his and his wife's initials are exhibited in the Old Stone House museum.

Among the great grandchildren of Comfort Starr were the seven Starr sisters. They were often referred to wittily as the "Seven Stars" or the "Pleiades". One of these sisters, Grace Starr, was the last member of the family to reside in the homestead. She died in 1874 and soon after the house was sold.

The twin black walnut trees, one of which still graces the lawn in front of the house, are said to have been planted by Hannah, one of the seven sisters, as the church bells were tolling to celebrate the treaty which ended the War of 1812.

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The house is a small peak roofed structure with an added lean-to. Between the outside studs it is packed with mud and meadow grass, probably as a crude method of insulation to withstand the severity of the early New England winters. Other features are the exposed summer beams. Rough and hand hewn, they all have chamfered edges with the original adz marks still showing. All the exposed posts have moulded lambs tongues. These features are a derivative of Kent, England, the birthplace of Henry Kingsnorth, which is probably why the influence is in evidence here. Unlike most seventeenth century houses this one does not face the south but faces the east. The house in general is in good condition, and in its setting is an excellent tribute to the craftsmen who constructed so durably with the materials on hand.

The present owner is Mrs. Annie Rawson of Guilford.

Sources of information: Yesteryears of Guilford - Griswold
History of Guilford - Smith

Author:

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Approved:

Harold H. Davis Date: *Sept 25, 1940*